

## Chronology of Daphne Odjig's life:

Attachment #1

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*The Drawings and Paintings of Daphne Odjig: A Retrospective Exhibition* by Bonnie Devine. Published by the National Gallery of Canada in collaboration with the Art Gallery of Sudbury, 2007

### 1919

Born 11 September at Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve, Manitoulin Island, Ontario, the first of four children, to Dominic Odjig and his English war bride Joyce Peachy. Odjig's widowed grandfather, Jonas Odjig, lives with the family in the house he had built a generation earlier and which still stands in Wikwemikong today.

The family is industrious and relatively prosperous by reserve standards. Jonas Odjig is a carver of monuments and tombstones; Dominic is the village constable. The family also farms their land, raises cows, pigs, and chickens and owns a team of horses.

### 1925

Begins school at Jesuit Mission in Wikwemikong. An avid student, she turns the family's pig house into a play school where she teaches local children to read and count. When they tire of her instruction she converts the play school into a play church and hears their confessions.

The family is musical. Daphne plays the guitar; Dominic the violin. They all enjoy sing-a-longs and music nights listening to a hand-cranked phonograph. She develops a life-long love of opera singing.

She is athletic and participates in the annual fall fairs at Manitowaning, the nearest off-reserve town, eight miles away, taking prizes in running and public speaking. Art is her favourite subject and she develops the habit of sketching with her grandfather and father, both of whom are artistic. She also helps her mother with needlework designs for the church linens.

### 1932

Contracts rheumatic fever. Her formal education ends following grade seven.

Confined to bed for six months and infirm for the following three years.

**1938**

Mother and grandfather die within weeks of each other.

Maternal grandmother removes the four Odjig children to her home in Perry Sound, Ontario. Here Odjig encounters systemic racism for the first time when she is refused work because of her Native appearance and name. She and her siblings adopt the surname Fisher. Her two brothers still go by that name.

**1942**

Moves to Toronto with her sister Winnifred (Winnie).

Works at the John Inglis Munitions, Planters Peanuts and Dr. Ballards dog food factories.

Attends dances in the evening at the Palais Royale with Winnie. Briefly considers a career as a flamenco dancer.

Frequents the gallery at the Eaton's College Street store, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and "discovers" painting.

Over the next decade she teaches herself by trial and error to paint.

**1945**

Moves to British Columbia to marry Paul Somerville, a Mohawk/Metis Second World War veteran she met in Toronto. Becomes stepmother to Paul's eight-year-old son, David.

**1946**

The family moves to Coquitlam, British Columbia.

**1948**

Son Stanley Somerville is born.

Continues her art explorations, experimenting in oils on homemade stretchers and recycled tent canvas. Influenced by Cornelius Krieghoff, she paints naturalistic landscapes.

**1950**

Discovers Picasso.

Dissatisfied with the confines of Realism, begins experimenting with Cubism and Abstract Expressionism, carefully analyzing and copying Picasso's style and the techniques of American and European Modernists in books and magazines.

1955

Family moves to Lindell Beach on Cultus Lake, British Columbia.

1958

Family purchases thirty-acre farm at Columbia Valley near Cultus Lake with a plan to grow strawberries.

1960

Paul Somerville dies of injuries sustained in a car accident just before harvest of first test crop. Later this year she plants their acreage as planned.

1961

Farm yields five and a half tons of strawberries in the spring. She spends the summer tending the farm. In the winter she focuses on painting.

Begins period of intense artistic experimentation. She learns by copying works in books borrowed from the library and visits the Vancouver Art Gallery to study painting techniques up close. Influenced by the Impressionists, Daphne experiments with light effects, broken brush strokes and Cloisonnism.

1962

Sister Winnie enters *Theatre Queue* (cat. 45) in a juried competition. On the strength of this painting Daphne is elected a Member of the British Columbia Federation of Artists the following year.

Marries Chester Beavon, a friend and co-worker of her late husband Paul. Moves to the city of Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. Beavon applies for work as a community development officer in northern Manitoba.

1964

Attends the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Wikwemikong Pow Wow. With sister-in-law Rosemary Peltier-Fisher, she meets the elder ladies of the community, who recount the old Nanabush tales. Rosemary suggests that Daphne paint the legends to help the revival of the culture.

Hangs an exhibition of Native art at the Wiki Pow Wow with Tom Peltier, which is seen by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson and later purchased in its entirety by the Federal Department of Cultural Affairs.

Beavon is posted to Grand Rapids, Manitoba.

1966

Couple is assigned to Easterville, Northern Manitoba a small community of Chemahawin Cree who were displaced when the dam at Grand Rapids went

into operation. Records their hardship and endurance in a series of pen and ink drawings depicting the people and their day-to-day activities.

Begins work on the legend paintings suggested by Rosemary Peltier.

Makes her first sale to Gary Scherbaín, a visiting civil servant who begins to sell her work out of his home in Winnipeg.

Introduced to the work of Norval Morrisseau. His strong formline has an immediate but ultimately temporary influence on her calligraphic line.

### 1967

First public solo exhibition. Organized by Susan Ross at the Lakehead Art Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Seventy-eight drawings, pastels and acrylics.

### 1968

Commissioned by Dr. Herbert Schwarz to paint a series of erotic illustrations for his book *Tales From the Smokehouse* (cats. 31 to 36).

Solo exhibition in Brandon, Manitoba sponsored by the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and mounted by Bernard Polly, an art instructor at Brandon University.

Learns collage techniques from Polly and begins a series of mixed media collages incorporating natural materials. A looser, expressionistic style begins to emerge.

### 1970

Exhibits commissioned work *Earth Mother* (cat. 8) at Canadian Pavilion, Expo 70, Osaka, Japan.

Begins reproducing Easterville ink drawings. Establishes Odjig Indian Prints of Canada.

### 1971

Learns how to scale-up drawings for transfer to large murals from Bernard Polly.

Creates mural, *The Great Flood*, at Peguis High School, Peguis Reserve, Hodgson, Manitoba.

Opens a small craft store at 331 Donald Street in Winnipeg.

Distributes reproduction prints of the Easterville drawings in unlimited editions to a growing market.

Tour and exhibition of her paintings at the Smotra Folklore Festival in Yugoslavia.

The paintings are lost en route.

Teaches at Manitou Art Foundation, Schreiber Island.

*Nanabush Tales* is published by Ginn and Company. The ten-book series of children's readers is dedicated to Rosemary Peltier, who died before she could see them published.

On a visit to Wikwemikong she learns about her Potawatomi roots and her ancestor Black Partridge from her Aunt Grace (cat. 3).

### 1972

Commissioned by the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Winnipeg, to create mural *The Creation of the World in Commemoration of the Manitoba Centennial*.

### 1973

Co-founds Professional Indian Artists Inc. (the Indian Group of Seven).

Awarded Swedish Brucebo Foundation Scholarship, travels as resident artist to the Foundation Studio, Visby Island of Gotland, Sweden.

Awarded Manitoba Arts Council Bursary.

Commissioned by the Royal Ontario Museum to create *From Mother Earth Flows the River of Life* for exhibition *Canadian Indian Art '74*.

Documentary: *Colours of Pride* (National Film Board, Canada).

### 1974

*Tales From the Smokehouse* published.

Expands craft shop to establish New Warehouse Gallery, first Native-run gallery in Canada.

Commissioned by Dr. William Taylor to produce the "biggest damned painting you can do."

### 1975

Travels to Israel at invitation of El Al (Israel Airlines) to tour and paint her interpretation of Jerusalem. Produces *The Jerusalem Series of Paintings and Prints*.

### 1976

Leaves Winnipeg for British Columbia. (Anglemont on Lake Shuswap).

Sells New Warehouse Gallery to Gary Scherbain, it is renamed Wah-sa Gallery.

Documentary: *Three Artists, Three Styles*, Spectrum, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canada.

1977

Awarded Canadian Silver Jubilee Medal

1978

Attends first National Native Artists' Conference at the Ojibwe Cultural Centre on Manitoulin Island, Ontario.

Presented Eagle Feather by Chief Wakageshig on behalf of the Wikwemikong Reserve, in recognition of artistic achievement, an honour previously reserved for men to acknowledge prowess in the hunt or in war.

Completes *The Indian in Transition*, commissioned by Dr. William Taylor for the National Museum of Man in 1974. Masterpiece installed in the National Arts Centre, Ottawa on extended loan.

1979

Commissioned by the McMichael Canadian Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, for painting *Rebirth of a Culture*.

1981

Documentary: *Spirits Speaking Through*, Spectrum, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

1982

Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*, conferred by Laurentian University, Sudbury Ontario.

1983

Second National Native Artists' Conference held at K'san, British Columbia. Learns monoprintmaking technique from Joseph Sanchez (original member of the Indian Group of Seven) during a visit to Arizona.

1984

Commissioned by Laurentian University Museum and Art Centre, Sudbury, Ontario for painting *Spiritual Renewal*.

1985

First Retrospective Exhibition, Thunder Bay National Exhibition Centre and Centre for Indian Art.

Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, conferred by University of Toronto, Ontario

1986

Commissioned by Glenview Corporation, Ottawa, Ontario for works *Tomorrow Will Hold Our Past* and *We Dance Through Time*.

Selected as one of four international artists to paint an homage to Pablo Picasso for the Picasso Museum in Antibes, France.

Appointed to the Order of Canada C.M.

**1988-93**

Honourary Board Member of the Canadian Heritage Foundation.

**1989**

Elected Member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Art (R.C.A.)

Documentary: *Window on Canada, Daphne Odjig Painter* Tokyo Television, Japan.

**1992**

Commemorative Medal for the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada.

*A Paintbrush In My Hand, Daphne Odjig* published by Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc.

**1993**

Presented Eagle Feather by SCANA (Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry) at the National Native Symposium, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

**1994**

Presented Certificate of Honour by the En'owkin Centre (Penticton, British Columbia) and Canada's Drug Strategy Program.

**1996**

Doctor of Education, *honoris causa*, conferred by Nipissing University, North Bay, Ontario.

Honourary Patron of the Ojibway Cultural Foundation Capital Campaign, West Bay, Ontario.

Included in Kamloops Art Gallery's limited edition print portfolio, *Collecting Canadian Art*.

**1998**

National Aboriginal Achievement Award, Toronto, Ontario.

**1999**

Moves with Chester Beavon from the Shuswap to Penticton, British Columbia.

**2001**

*Odjig: The Art of Daphne Odjig* published by Key Porter Books Ltd. Toronto ON  
Published limited edition prints of *And Some watched the Sunset*, Ted Haworth, printer.

**2002**

Doctor of Letters, conferred by Okanagan University College, Kelowna, British Columbia.

Receives Commemorative Golden Jubilee Medal (Queen Elizabeth II)

*Genesis*, Canadian Christmas Stamp

**2003**

Receives Xpression Award, initiative of the National Film Board of Canada, Ottawa, for championing cultural diversity.

Documentary: *Life and Work of Woodland Artists*. First Voice Multimedia Inc.

**2004**

*The Art Show* a play about her life and art by Alanis King, produced by Native Earth Performing Arts, premiers in Toronto ON

Published limited edition prints of *In Tune With the Infinite*, Steve Mennie, printer  
Salmon Arm BC

**2005**

*Forty Years of Prints*, exhibition of her limited edition prints, Kamloops Art Gallery, Kamloops BC

**2007**

Receives Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts

Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*, conferred by Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops BC

Appointed to the Order of British Columbia.

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